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Marlovian Parody and Asinine Heroism in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*

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Marlovian Parody and Asinine Heroism in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*

by

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2014

Epigraph

If we imagine no worse of them than they of
themselves, they may pass for excellent men.

– *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (V. i. 211-212)

A parody! a parody! with a kind of miraculous gift,
to make it absurder than it was.

– Ben Jonson, *Every Man in his Humour*

Acknowledgements

I owe a large debt of gratitude to the many people who have supported me on this project and those who have more generally made my life and work infinitely more pleasant. To my family, whose support has been constant and stable even when I have not been, I owe foremost thanks. My readers, Eric Mallin and J. K. Barret, have provided insightful comments and encouragement along the way and have patiently and graciously dedicated their time and energy to improving my work. Marjorie Woods has fostered my interest in narratives of Dido through the centuries and has encouraged this project in its various forms. Douglas Bruster and James Loehlin have generously addressed questions I have had along the way. I am deeply grateful to the Department of English at The University of Texas at Austin for the collegial and supportive environment that is encouraged here, and I am especially grateful for my colleagues in graduate school who make work seem an awful lot like fun.

Abstract

Marlovian Parody and Asinine Heroism in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*

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William Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* which has previously been denied a dramatic source, in fact features a deep engagement with Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* on both structural and thematic grounds. I suggest that *MND* features a conscious, parodic engagement with *Dido* that derives from both the overriding Ovidian mode in which both plays are written, and more importantly from Shakespeare's direct parodying of the romantic plot features in *Dido*, a play that itself parodies Virgil's *Aeneid* and undermines its *pius* Aeneas. Shakespeare's deployment of multiple Marlovian techniques–in a nearly identical fashion to Marlowe's–generates a comic appropriation of Marlowe's storyline that constitutes interpretation of and commentary upon *Dido* and the stakes of Aeneas' heroism in Marlowe's play.

Shakespeare adapts a number of dramaturgical methods from Marlowe: instantiations of triangular erotic desire; "gender inversion" and the pursuit of men by women; substitution and conflation of maternal and erotic relations; infantilization of male lovers; and wooing queens with Cupid's polarizing arrows. Each of these dramatic techniques figures prominently in both Dido's relationship with Aeneas and Bottom's with Titania. Shakespeare's comic subplot about the interaction between Bottom and Titania can thus be read as a microcosmic, mock-epic retelling of the main plot of *Dido*. Rather than a subplot that parodically or comically rehearses the events of *MND*'s main plot, Shakespeare writes a subplot that is tangential to the play's main action and in it interprets *Dido* as a comic storyline with potential to defer or avoid the harm caused by Aeneas' abandonment of Dido. Bottom's tryst with Titania parodies *Dido* by using multiple Marlovian tactics directly from Dido and Aeneas' affair, yet lowering the stakes of erotic entanglement in order to suggest a feasible alternative to Aeneas' catastrophic departure from Carthage. Within *MND*, Bottom and Titania's tryst serves as a counterpoint to the sometimes violent silencing–and consistent male domination–of women in Athens proper under Theseus' ruthless patriarchy. By parodying Marlowe's Aeneas and foregrounding Duke Theseus' past abuses of woman, Shakespeare interrogates classical heroism and suggests a benign form of heroism in the character Bottom.

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Chapter 1: Introductions and Definitions

A Midsummer Night's Dream closes with the final scenes of two dramas: one, the inset "palpable-gross play" performed by Quince's rude mechanicals and the other, Shakespeare's framing comedy of fairies and multiple weddings. As chief critic of the inset play, Theseus denies the mechanicals their epilogue and prefers instead to watch them dance a Bergomask, thereby terminating the commentary with which Theseus, Demetrius, and Lysander had punctuated the mechanicals' presentation of "Pyramus and Thisbe." The Athenian noblemen's running commentary does not represent *MND*'s first presentation of auditors meddling with and pronouncing upon the action of a drama enacted by lower-stature characters. In seeming anticipation of the coming play-within-a-play, Puck delights in the mayhem he has caused among the four young lovers from Athens and asks Oberon, "Shall we their fond pageant see?" He continues, "And those things do best please me / that befall prepost'rously." (3.2. 114-121). [1] Much in the way that Theseus asserts, "Our sport shall be to take what they mistake," and that "Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity / in least speak most, to my capacity," (5.1. 90-105), Puck derives enjoyment from the bumbling of lesser beings and his elevated status as commentator.

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[1] All quotations from *MND* refer to The Arden Shakespeare Second Series, ed. Harold F. Brooks (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2013); quotations from other Shakespeare plays have been taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare, s*econd edition, ed. G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997).

Establishing as it does a precedent for audition and critical commentary within a drama, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* prompts inquiry into Shakespeare's practices not only as a playwright, but also as a consumer and critical viewer of drama by his contemporaries. Generations of source studies have unearthed and explored a wealth of sources from classical authors used in Shakespeare's composition process, and critical consensus indicates an almost incontrovertible likelihood that Ovid's *Metamophoses,* particularly Arthur Golding's translation of the poem, contributed heavily to *MND* on the whole and especially to the language of the Pyramus and Thisbe playlet.[2] A less explored aspect of Shakespeare's influences while composing *MND* remains the localized influence of playwrights whose work Shakespeare would have encountered as a frequenter of and participant in the Elizabethan theater. Considering the known prominence of the plays of Christopher Marlowe immediately prior to Shakespeare's own rise in eminence, this study will focus on Shakespeare's engagement with Marlowe's work as it may have borne out in the composition of *MND*.[3]

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[2] T. W. Baldwin, *Shakspere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944) mostly works to unearth early modern pedagogy and the texts likely read at Elizabethan grammar schools. See Madeleine Forey, "'Bless Thee, Bottom, Bless Thee! Thou Art Translated!': Ovid, Golding, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Modern Language Review* 93, no. 2 (April 1998): 321-329 for a review of Shakespeare's debt to Golding. Harold F. Brooks's extensive footnotes to the Arden Second Series *MND* map out dozens of instances of Shakespeare borrowing Golding's language. Jonathan Bate's *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) and the collection *Shakespeare's Ovid*, ed. A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) both explore the debt of Shakespeare's allusions to the poetic works of Ovid.

[3] My approach owes a great debt to James Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991) and to Robert A. Logan, *Shakespeare's Marlowe: The Influence of Christopher Marlowe on Shakespeare's Artistry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

James Shapiro and Robert A. Logan have written extensively and brilliantly about Marlowe's generalized influence on Shakespeare's craft. Shapiro identifies the years 1597-1600 as a period that witnessed "a concentrated exploration–and, through parodic recollections, an exorcism–of Marlowe's legacy that culminated by the century's end in generous acknowledgements of the extent of his debt to Marlowe's art."[4] I follow both Shapiro and Logan in conceiving of Marlowe's work not as a source for Shakespeare, but rather as an influence. This distinction, which Logan articulates at length, should make clear that–in contrast to simple identification of a source–a discussion of influence entails "not simply the conscious or subconscious selection of elements in another writer's work but, more significantly, the use(s) to which they are put."[5] Logan's approach to influence benefits in my view from its emphasis not only on derivation but also on reappropriation, adaptation, or homage. One can further posit that when Shakespeare parodies or recollects Marlowe–or any influence, for that matter–he also refashions Marlovian phrases and techniques in a manner that constitutes critical comment or parody by means of interpretation and redeployment, depending upon the ends to which he uses Marlovian references.[6]

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[4] Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights,* 82.

[5] Logan, *Shakespeare's Marlowe*, 9-14.

[6] Cf. Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), xv. McMillin and Maclean conclude that Shakespeare "...learned his method for rewriting the plays of the Queen's Men from no one more obviously than the Marlowe whom the Queen's Men were trying to reject." See also their chapter, "Shakespeare and Marlowe," 155-170.

In *A Midsummer Night Dream's* final act, Shakespeare aptly demonstrates his capacity for critical appropriation of sources not only in the words of Theseus, Demetrius, and Lysander as they critique the mechanicals' performance, but also in the burlesqued presentation of a "tedious and brief" tragedy. Shakespeare's burlesque of Golding's *Metamorphoses* draws its satirical force from the various incapacities of the actors–which cause constant breakdowns of the inset play's fourth wall and an overstated inability to distinguish fiction from reality–as well as from the doggerel verse of the drama's dialogue and Quince's poorly punctuated prologue. As evidenced by his adaptation of "Pyramus and Thisbe" into *Romeo and Juliet,* Shakespeare does not seem to find Ovid's tale of star-crossed lovers inherently comic; rather, he seems to be exploring the comic and parodic potential of a well-known tragic storyline from the classical canon.[7] In so far as Shakespeare inserts phrases directly quoting Golding's translation of Ovid, one wonders whether it is Ovid or Golding who bears the brunt of Shakespeare's parodic venom. Irrespective of its target, the inset "Pyramus and Thisbe" drama distinctly articulates a parodic and referential tendency in *MND* that ripples outward well beyond this most explicit example. In overtly and consciously parodying classical poetry, Shakespeare reveals the unmistakable influence not only of the translating poet he parodies, but also of a contemporary whose imprint upon his other plays has already been well-documented: Christopher Marlowe.

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[7] Cf. Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, 132: "By including Quince's literal and deficient *translatio*, Shakespeare draws attention to the higher level of his own. It is elsewhere in the play, not in 'Pyramus and Thisbe,' that we find all the marks of true Ovidianism." See also: Walter Staton, Jr., "Ovidian Elements in *A Midsummer Night's Dream," Huntington Library Quarterly* 26, No. 2 (February 1963): 165-178.

For all his painstaking attention to most of Marlowe's plays, James Shapiro conspicuously leaves *Dido, Queen of Carthage* relatively unexplored as an influence on Shakespeare's writing.[8] Shapiro's proposed range of dates when Shakespeare most frequently recollected and exorcised Marlowe's influence could readily encompass his composition of *MND*, which Harold F. Brooks dates with relative certainty between August 1594 and Francis Meres's published mention of the play in September 1598.[9] I propose that Shakespeare made use of multiple Marlovian techniques in *MND*, not the least of which was his extended meditation on Ovid and his conspicuous burlesquing of a truly tragic Ovidian metamorphosis. Specifically, I posit that Shakespeare gained and appropriated a number of structural and dramaturgical insights from one of Marlowe's less-discussed plays, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*; Shakespeare's deployment of Marlowe's parodic tactics involves retention of major structural and thematic elements while drastically reducing the tragic stakes, thus constituting an interpretation of Marlowe's *Dido* that highlights its comic potentialities. Several critics have outlined the numerous points of contact between *Dido* and *Antony and Cleopatra*,[10] and I must concur that the parallels are striking; I will argue, however, that Shakespeare saw *Dido* foremost as a

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[8] Shapiro suggests that with *Titus Andronicus,* Shakespeare "indirectly confronts Marlowe's achievements in rendering Virgil (in *Dido*) and Ovid (in the *Elegies*) in his own imitations of these classical antecedents (*Rival Playwrights,* 118). He also reads the Player's speech from *Hamlet* as Shakespeare's "last and greatest recollection of Marlowe," (126 ff).

[9] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks, xxxiv.

[10] Logan, *Marlowe's Shakespeare,* 169-196. See also: Thomas P. Harrison, "Shakespeare and Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage, The University of Texas Studies in English* 35 (1956): 57-63.

parody with great comic potential, and that his composition of *Antony and Cleopatra* was not his first attempt to rewrite the play from Marlowe's Cambridge days.[11]

To suggest that Shakespeare was interested by "the widow Dido" requires little justification; Dido is mentioned in passing in *The Tempest*, *2 Henry IV, Antony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet* and *Titus Andronicus*.[12] Shakespeare explicitly invokes Marlowe with surprising frequency, as well: the "player scene" in *Hamlet* seems to refer to Marlowe's version of Aeneas' tale to Dido,[13] and *As You Like It* quotes directly from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander.*[14] *The Merchant of Venice* alludes to Dido's woes immediately following a mention of Thisbe in Lorenzo and Jessica's jesting catalogue of literary characters pining for lost loves.[15] This collocation of allusions to Thisbe and

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[11] David Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004): 114 ff, dates the composition of *Dido* to 1584-1585 based on evidence from the performance history of the Chapel Children for whom it was composed. See also H. J. Oliver's introduction to *Dido Queen of Carthage and The Massacre at Paris*, The Revels Plays, ed. H. J. Oliver (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), xxv-xxx. Oliver dates the play to 1587, but indicates the possibility of an earlier composition date.

[12] See Heather James, "Dido's Ear: Tragedy and the Politics of Response," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52, No. 3 (Autumn, 2001): 364. "Shakespeare is mysteriously attracted to Vergil's Dido, who sporadically appears in his plays, often with little apparent relation to plot. Should we, like *The Tempest's* Adrian, feel called upon to study her enigmatic presence in Shakespearean drama, we will find the image of Dido mingled with reflections on audiences who have grown dangerously rapt in sympathy over tragic spectacle and story."

[13] See James Black, "Hamlet Hears Marlowe; Shakespeare Reads Virgil," *Renaissance and Reformation* XVIII, no. 4 (1994): 19-28, and Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights,* 126-132.

[14] Phoebe utters one of Marlowe's better-known phrases from the poem when she muses, "Who ever loved who loved not at first sight." For explorations of this quotation, see Robert Logan, *Shakespeare's Marlowe* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 15, and Dorothea Kehler, "Shakespeare's Recollections of Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage:* Two Notes," *ANQ* 14, no. 1 (2001): 5-6. Kehler also detects Marlowe's imprint upon *The Comedy of Errors*.

[15] This scene between Lorenzo and Jessica occurs at 5. 1. 1-13.

Dido implies that Shakespeare may have conceived of the two stories in a similar fashion–tales of tragically jilted women and their self-sacrificing love. In *MND,* with its extended deployment of Thisbe's tale, Shakespeare also invokes Dido early as Hermia swears her loyalty to Lysander:

> I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,
> By his best arrow with the golden head,
> By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
> By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
> And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen
> When the false Trojan under sail was seen; (1.1. 169-174)

Hermia's oaths have a distinctly Marlovian tinge to them: the imagery of Cupid's arrow could be an echo of Marlowe's own line in *Hero and Leander,* "Love's arrow with the golden head," (l. 161).[16] Like Shakespeare, Marlowe emphasizes Venus' doves–with which the goddess was frequently associated–in *Dido, Queen of Carthage* by assigning them to serve as "centronels" for Venus' sleeping grandson, Ascanius. Shakespeare also makes explicit, as Marlowe does, that Dido death was caused by her self-immolation. Harold F. Brooks contends that Shakespeare must refer to Virgil in line 173 because, "It is in Virgil (IV. 584 ff.) that before she immolates herself on the pyre Dido actually sees Aeneas sailing away, and not in Marlowe and Nashe..."[17] Brooks overlooks that in Virgil's account, Dido perishes of a self-inflicted wound after falling onto Aeneas' sword:

> With these words on her lips her companions saw her
> Collapse onto the sword, saw the blade

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[16] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks, p. 15 n. 170. Brooks also notes a similar image in Golding's *Metamorphoses*, albeit with different phrasing.

[17] Ibid, n. 173-174.

Foaming with blood and her hands spattered...
The wound hissed
Deep in her chest. Three times she struggled
To prop herself upon her elbow,
Three times she rolled back on the bed. (4. 769-806)[18]

In the *Aeneid*, the symbolism of Aeneas' sword piercing Dido's heart and the wounded Dido's pained climb to the top of her funerary pyre extends the scene and lends it much of its pathos. Marlowe departs from the Virgilian tradition on this point by having Dido cast Aeneas' sword into flames before she herself burns (5.1. 295 ff).[19] Shakespeare, furthermore, does not specify by whom Aeneas was seen under sail–thus, Shakespeare could just as readily refer to Marlowe, as he does in line 170, as to Virgil.

While Shakespeare's most conspicuous invocation of *Dido* appears in act 1, scene 1, there are a number of subsequent textual echoes of Marlowe's words throughout *MND*. Vows exchanged between lovers within Shakespeare's play seem to allude to Marlowe again when Lysander vows to Hermia, "And then end life when I end loyalty!" (2.2. 62). Here, Shakespeare echoes a line spoken by Aeneas to Dido, "When I leave thee, death be my punishment!" (4.4. 56). Shakespeare allows the faery Puck to comment upon the gravity of mortal oaths, which for the purposes of both Marlowe's and Shakespeare's plays do not hold: "Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth, / A million fail, confounding oath on oath." (3.2. 92-93). Puck's remark exemplifies the spirit of a text that seems to serve as a common denominator between *Dido* and *MND*: Ovid's *Heroides*,

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[18] Virgil's *Aeneid,* trans. Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2005).

[19] All quotations from Marlowe have been taken from *Dido Queen of Carthage and The Massacre at Paris*, The Revels Plays, ed. H. J. Oliver (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

which catalogues broken oaths by classical heroes. That Shakespeare had read the *Metamorphoses* before composing *MND* seems manifest, as discussed above.[20] Kerri Lynne Thomsen and others have also argued for Shakespeare's knowledge of the *Heroides*, both in *MND* and in *Taming of the Shrew*.[21] Thomsen notes that Ovid's *Heroides*, a series of letters from wronged women in the classical tradition addressed to the men who wronged them, had been translated into English by George Turberville under the title *Heroycall Epistles* in 1567 and was reprinted multiple times before 1601. This fact, when considered alongside Marlowe's translations of Ovid's *Amores* as the *Elegies,* indicates that some measure of Marlowe's influence on Shakespeare's writing was their shared readership of multiple volumes of Ovid's poetry.

Ovid and Marlowe converge for Shakespeare within the dialogue of "Pyramus and Thisbe." Lovers exchanging vows serve as a sort of set piece for dense allusion within *MND*, and Pyramus and Thisbe's vows to one another remind us that Marlowe's influence has not been dropped by the play's end: "*Pyramus:* Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace; / and like Limander am I trusty still. / *Thisbe:* And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill." (5.1.193-195). Typical of the rude mechanicals' comically botched

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[20] Cf. John W. Velz, "Shakespeare's Ovid in the Twentieth Century: a Critical Survey," in *Shakespeare's Ovid: the Metamorphoses in the Plays and Poems*, ed A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 185. "To this day, *Venus and Adonis* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are regarded by many scholars as Shakespeare's most Ovidian works."

[21] Kerri Lynne Thomsen, "Melting Vows: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Ovid's *Heroycall Epistles," English Language Notes* 40, no. 4 (June 2003): 25-33. Concerning *Taming of the Shrew*, see Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 95-96. Enterline follows Patricia Phillippy, "'Loytering in Love': Ovid's *Heroides*, Hospitality, and Humanist Education in *Taming of the Shrew*," *Criticism* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 27-53, in her conclusions.

delivery, the names "Hero" and "Leander" are travestied in order to heighten the effect of Shakespeare's burlesque. Shakespeare's reference to Hero and Leander in a play that has already quoted from Marlowe's translation of their tale calls Marlowe to mind yet again and suggestively hints that the names "Hermia" and "Lysander" are likewise travesties of the titular characters of Marlowe's poem.

If the preceding discussion has argued convincingly that Marlowe and *Dido* provided a poetic context for Shakespeare's composition of *MND,* then one must begin to search for the signs of that relationship that extend beyond the overt references already mentioned. As I have already hinted, a major signifier of a relationship between the two plays is their shared tendency to parody classical authors, Ovid most especially. Shakespeare's engagement with *Dido* clearly does not confine itself to an abstracted reworking of a Roman poet, however, as seen through his multiple echoes of Marlovian lines. *MND* also exhibits a strong tendency to imitate Marlowe's story-lines and mimic the relationship dynamics between Marlowe's characters, and as such presents the possibility of a parody of *Dido in toto*, or at the very least a profound dramaturgical debt to Marlowe and his own parodic tactics. Shakespeare's parody of a parody also presents the possibility that his re-interpretation of Marlowe contains an extension of Marlowe's critique of Aeneas and the disastrous wake he leaves on the way to Latium; much like Marlowe's tragedy at times exhibits the trappings of comedy, Shakespeare's parodic comedy bears with it a serious lesson about the dangers of canonical 'heroism.'

Parody: Definitions and distinctions:

In discussing "Pyramus and Thisbe" in *MND*, I have used the term 'burlesque' to describe Shakespeare's presentation of the playlet in act 5. In using this term, I have attempted to distinguish the rude mechanicals' performance from the type of parody that occurs elsewhere in *MND* and in Marlowe's *Dido*. Parody can be usefully characterized by its Greek etymology, which suggests that parody is either a "counter-song" or a "song beside" the original, which it imitates and re-contextualizes.[22] In contrast, Margaret A. Rose tentatively defines a burlesque as a type of parody "when the imitation humorously parallels the style or mannerisms of a particular work or author or school, but with a trivial or ludicrous purpose."[23] Therefore, Shakespeare's inclusion of phrases from Golding's *Metamorphoses* entails a burlesque treatment of "Pyramus and Thisbe" through the ridiculing reception to which the playlet is subjected, whereas his inclusion of preformed phrases or images from Marlowe occasions parody because the context of employment is not necessarily ludicrous. Thus burlesque is defined against parody, which, "unlike forms of satire or burlesque which do not make their target a significant part of themselves, is ambivalently dependent upon the object of its criticism for its own reception."[24] A further distinction should be made between parody and satire, and this distinction is again best articulated by Rose:

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[22] Linda Hutcheon and M. Woodland, "Parody," *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene and Stephen Cushman, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 1002.

[23] Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 55.

[24] Ibid., 51.

> ...one major factor which distinguishes the parody from satire is, as already noted, the parody's use of the preformed material of its 'target' as a constituent part of its own structure. Satire, on the other hand, need not be restricted to the imitation, distortion, or quotation of other literary texts or preformed artistic materials, and when it does deal with such preformed material... [satire] may simply make fun of it as a target external to itself.[25]

In light of this definition, Marlowe's additions to Virgil's text in *Dido*–such as the opening scene between Jove and Ganymede–function as satire because they are not dependent upon a preformed text for their effect, whereas Marlowe's strategic inclusion and elision of translated passages from the *Aeneid* constitute parody because his play depends upon and imitates Virgil for the bulk of its content. Linda Hutcheon and Malcolm Woodland provide a refined and sweeping definition of parody that I will employ for my purposes:

> ...parody involves opposition or contrast: it is a form of repetition with ironic critical difference, marking difference rather than similarity... an ironic but not necessarily disrespectful revisiting and recontextualizing of an earlier work. [26]

By this definition of parody, the mechanism by which parody functions involves interpretation of and comment upon the work parodied, as highlighted by the ironic critical difference between the parodying and the parodied texts. Hutcheon and Woodland's definition encompasses the gamut of parody's manifestations and may help to account for the strikingly different versions of parodic engagement demonstrated in Marlowe's tragedy of Dido and Shakespeare's prurient comedy in *A Midsummer Night's*

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[25] Ibid., 81-82.

[26] Linda Hutcheon and Malcolm Woodland, "Parody," *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, eds. Roland Greene and Stephen Cushman, 4th ed., (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012), 1002.

Dream. What the two plays share is their conscious imitation of known texts, either in Marlowe's reformulation of the *Aeneid*'s first four books or in Shakespeare's references to Marlowe and the mimicry of Marlovian parodic techniques.

A number of scholars have written detailed accounts of the multiple valences of Marlowe's satire in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, which functions primarily as a satirical and parodic reworking of Virgil's *Aeneid* with Ovidian inflections.[27] Considering Marlowe's choice to name Dido his protagonist and grant her an eponymous play, the potential influence of Ovid's *Heroides* 7, which features a missive from Dido to Aeneas, looms large. Ovid's missive, as Dido, questions the validity of Aeneas' imperial agenda: "What is achieved, you turn your back upon; what is to be achieved, you ever pursue. One land has been sought and gained, and ever must another be sought, through the wide world," (ll 13-15).[28] Such a characterization of Aeneas would suggest him as a more likely candidate for primacy as a Marlovian protagonist, if indeed Harry Levin's characterization of Marlovian characters as overreachers holds correct. Yet Marlowe

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[27] Scholars discussing the question of Marlowe's influences for *Dido* have reached a practical consensus that Marlowe's sources are more Ovidian than Vergilian. For an early discussion of Marlowe's departures from Vergil and the influence of translating Ovid on Marlowe's *Dido*, see Frederick Boas's *Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940): 53-64. Lucy Potter compares the Aeneas of the *Aeneid* with the Aeneas of Ovid's *Heroides* as these portrayals relate to Marlowe's play in "Marlowe's *Dido*: Virgilian or Ovidian?," *Notes and Queries* 56, no. 4 (December 2009): 540-544. See also: Timothy D. Crowley, "Arms and the Boy: Marlowe's Aeneas and the Parody of Imitation in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*," *English Literary Renaissance* 38, no. 3 (2008): 408-38, and Emma Buckley, "'Live, false Aeneas!' Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and the limits of translation," *Classical Receptions Journal* 3, no. 2 (2011): 129–147.

[28] Ovid, *Heroides,* translated by Grant Showerman and revised by G. P. Goold (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977), 83.

focuses instead on the spurned *relicta* of Aeneas' conquest in what amounts to an incisive, parodic expansion of Virgil's tale.

Marlowe's parody levels its aim at a number of targets, but its central thrust works to systematically undermine the seriousness of the Olympian gods and their anointed child, Aeneas. Harry Levin comments that Marlowe "restores the classical pantheon only to despoil it; he seeks out the great archetypes of humanity in order to challenge them, one by one, on the very grounds of their mythological fame." [29] In a comprehensive and magisterial study of the literary tradition surrounding Dido the historical figure, both in continental European and English works, Don Cameron Allen concludes that Marlowe's play follows Chaucer and Lydgate in rejecting the *translatio imperii*–the "myth by which cultural authority migrates from Troy to imperial Rome to England and rival European states"–and framing Aeneas foremost as a traitor.[30] Donald Stump, who catalogues at length the many potentially parodic aspects of *Dido*, goes so far as to describe Aeneas as "a feckless, self-serving opportunist." [31]

Despite the prevailing view that Marlowe skewers Aeneas' behavior and motives throughout the play, many critical discussions of the play confine their readings to the

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[29] Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), 20.

[30] Don Cameron Allen, "Marlowe's *Dido* and the Tradition," in *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig,* ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962), 55-68. For an extension of this definition of *translatio imperii*, see Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, politics, and the translation of empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 7-41.

[31] Donald Stump, "Marlowe's Travesty of Virgil: *Dido* and Elizabethan Dreams of Empire," *Comparative Drama* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 103. Stump's reading of the play views Marlowe as an opponent to Queen Elizabeth's potential match with the Duke of Anjou, but the play's proposed composition date seems to undermine the topicality of such an allegorical reading of the anti-heroic Aeneas.

events leading up to Aeneas' departure from Carthage. There seems to be a tacit acknowledgement that although Marlowe can mock Aeneas while he dallies with Dido, Aeneas' imperial motives transcend his character flaws because his imperatives ultimately succeed: Latium is founded, Rome will rise. Unlike Virgil, however, Marlowe neither extenuates not valorizes Aeneas' departure from Carthage. In fact, although Marlowe translates Dido's venomous diatribe against the departing Aeneas nearly verbatim at 5.1. 141-210, he reduces Aeneas' defense of himself to two lines: "In vain, my love, thou spend'st thy fainting breath: If words might move me, I were overcome." (5.1. 153-154). These are Aeneas' final lines in the play, and their insensitivity catalyses the play's closing action with its multiple, rapid-fire suicides.

Marlowe adds the deaths of Dido's sister, Anna, and her jilted love interest, Iarbas, to Dido's suicide with little embellishment, and critics have mocked the moment for lack of pathos or for undermining of the gravity of Dido's death. While our pathos for Dido may be abruptly truncated by our surprise at the scene, Marlowe deftly demonstrates the tragic ripples of causation that Aeneas' departure sets off and supplants Virgil's narrative choice to follow Aeneas from the shores of Carthage. Marlowe heaps complicity on Aeneas by multiplying the corpses in his wake in the play's final moments, just as he had added Cassandra's and Polyxena's names to Creusa's in the catalogue of women Aeneas lost while fleeing Troy (2.1. 270 ff). *Dido*'s ending constitutes a forceful assertion that this drama both begins and ends–in its action and its consequences–with

Latium unseen, and Marlowe's parody of Virgil does not pause to vindicate Aeneas with a depiction of eventual heroism.

In light of my proposed addendum to *Dido*'s parodic function, this project seeks to build upon the wealth of recent criticism exploring *Dido*'s parodic elements.[32] Marlowe's irreverent reworking of the *Aeneid* provides a model for Shakespeare's burlesque of "Pyramus and Thisbe" within *MND* and also suggests a number of methods by which heterosexual relationships can be laden with comic freight. I will focus primarily on the moments of *Dido* that appear to inform Shakespeare's writing and the ways in which Shakespeare seizes upon Marlowe's own parodic techniques in order to generate the comedy of *MND*. Specifically, these techniques include: multiple instantiations of triangular erotic desire; instability of heterosexual relationships between the gods; infantilization of male lovers and the attendant conflation of the maternal with the erotic; romantic pursuit of males by females and this technique's implied gender inversion; and the polarization of affections as a result of Cupid's medicine, whereby 'love at first sight' entails vehement rejection of proximate potential lovers.

Shakespeare's consistent use of these Marlovian methods throughout *MND*'s subplot and main plot foregrounds the presence of parodic techniques in the play that extend well beyond the "Pyramus and Thisbe" burlesque. It is a critical commonplace that Shakespearean subplots sometimes function as parallels to and parodies of his main

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[32] See especially Donald Stump, "Marlowe's Travesty of Virgil," 87-94, and Timothy Crowley, "Arms and the Boy," 422-430.

plots,[33] yet *MND*'s Bottom subplot constitutes a parodic reworking not of the drama's main action, but rather of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. Both the parallel structuring of Bottom and Titania's tryst to Dido's and Aeneas' affair and the play's overriding emphasis on Marlovian and Ovidian parody contribute to the possibility that Shakespeare learned from and parodied *Dido* in his composition of *MND*. Shakespeare generates a regress of parody that reflects the limitless capacity for intertextual repetition with difference and reduces the structure of *Dido*'s romantic plot to mock-epic, thereby casting new light on his interpretation of Marlowe's play and the structural operations at work in *MND*. The following discussion will locate the multiple points of dramaturgical contact between the two plays in order to reevaluate Bottom's relationship with Titania and its literary provenance.

[33] Dean Frye, "The Question of Shakespearean 'Parody,'" *Essays in Criticism* 15, no. 1 (January 1965): 22-26.

Chapter 2: Marlowe's School of Parody: Parody's Mechanisms

Instantiations of triangular erotic desire:

Once again, Puck's voice may serve as the best-equipped to articulate Shakespeare's debt to and commentary upon *Dido*. The mischievous sprite serves as the *agent provocateur* of the 'fond pageant' among the Athenian lovers, and his misapplication of love-in-idleness engenders a second erotic triangle between the rival lovers Demetrius and Lysander–in this case with Helena, rather than Hermia, as its third point. Puck's introduction of the scene foregrounds Shakespeare's frequent use of romantic triangulation in *MND*: "Then will two at once woo one: / That must needs be sport alone," (3.2. 114-121). The play celebrates the erotic triangle structure first gravely–among the Athenian court–and later jocosely in the woods. That the erotic triangle draws its humor from its shunting aside of female cares is clear in Helena's comment that, "But you must join in souls to mock me too?... You are both rivals, and love Hermia; / And now both rivals to mock Helena," (3.2. 150-156). Helena's deepest desire prior to Demetrius and Lysander's seemingly unprompted vacillation toward her had been to become the object of Demetrius' desire.[34] Yet, when two rival lovers triangulate towards her, she anticipates Rene Girard and Eve Sedgwick's observation that such romantic triangulation remains ultimately a contest and relationship between men.

[34] Cf. René Girard, "The passionate oxymoron in Romeo and Juliet," *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* 25 (2007), 41-42.

In her book *Between Men*, Sedgwick extends Girard's discussion of romantic triangles and his insistence that:

> ...in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent.[35]

Hermia's conviction that the rivals for her affection mock her–while misapprehending the truth of the situation–recognizes the complicity between the two young men as one another's chief rivals. Her instincts are correct, as we see when both youths abandon her to pursue each other (as they believe) through the woods.

Shakespeare was not the first playwright of his day to recognize the dramatic potential of triangulated desire, but his specific debt to Marlowe, who also made great use of the technique in *Dido*, arises not so much from the formulation of the triangle itself, but rather the means by which erotic triangulation becomes realized and dramatized onstage. Although Shakespeare's initial setup of Hermia's conflict with her father allows for the potential of fierce rivalry between Demetrius and Lysander, it is only once Puck has applied love-in-idleness to the young Athenians' eyelids that their rivalry escalates. I return to the dramatic potency of Cupid's medicine below; at this juncture, I contend only that Shakespeare recalls Marlowe's use of Cupid as a catalyst for dramatically salient erotic triangulation. Act 3, scene 1 of *Dido* witnesses Cupid inculcating love for Aeneas in the queen of Carthage and thereby initiating the foregrounded romantic rivalry–

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[35] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), 21.

between Aeneas and Marlowe's substantially expanded character Iarbas–that was Marlowe's original contribution to Virgil's storyline. Shakespeare raises the stakes of Marlowe's formula somewhat by writing Cupid's unwieldy influence onto two would-be lovers rather than one, but the ferocity of Dido's love for Aeneas and the corresponding fervency of the rivalry created seems to inform Shakespeare's work.

Readers of Virgil's *Aeneid* will recall that Marlowe amplified the characters Anna and Iarbas significantly when he prepared his *Dido* for the stage. Yet surely Virgil's epic, with its extended meditation on the stakes of fate and *pietas*, was not lacking in dramatic potential. Marlowe's expansion of these secondary characters, who appear by name but without significant action in the *Aeneid*, enables him to expose aspects of romantic love that Virgil does not explore. Marlowe creates romantic rivalries between Aeneas and Iarbas and between Dido and Anna. Much like Helena in *MND*, Anna seems content to pursue the lover rejected by her romantic rival. By contrast, Iarbas actively works to interpose himself between Dido and Aeneas, thus allowing Dido to express her recognition of the homosocial bond that Iarbas feels for Aeneas after she has returned from consummating her relationship with the latter:

> *Dido*: But where were you, Iarbas, all this while?
> *Iarbas*: Not with Aeneas in the ugly cave.
> *Dido*: I see Aeneas sticketh in your mind. (4.1. 31-33)

Iarbas significantly emphasizes his separation from Aeneas, rather than from Dido, as he hotly responds to Dido's inquiry. His rejoinder bawdily suggests a bodily pun, as does Dido's. Iarbas' words recognize that his jealousy stems from his desire to cohabit 'the

ugly cave' with Aeneas, rather than his wish to leave Aeneas and retreat to a private place with Dido. To follow an apt phrase of Sedgwick's: "...we are in the presence of male heterosexual desire, in the form of a desire to consolidate partnership with authoritative males in and through the bodies of females."[36] Iarbas' obsessive love for Dido does not wane after her union with Aeneas, but instead prompts him to seek a means to supplant Aeneas in Aeneas' already-usurped role.

Iarbas and Aeneas are further bound together by Dido's response to Aeneas' first attempted flight from Troy. When the queen confiscates the outfitting she has provided for Aeneas' ships, she places the Trojan in an incapacitated position and presumably ties him to Carthage. Yet in attempting to bind Aeneas more tightly to herself, Dido effectively ties Aeneas more strongly to his chief romantic rival, as well. Dido's confiscation of Aeneas' masts, oars, and tackling symbolically castrates the Trojan and his fleet; when Aeneas perceives that he has been unmanned by a woman, his recourse is to beg for succor from a man.[37] Iarbas is all too happy to oblige and immediately reinstates those phallic tools–oars and ship masts–that will enable Aeneas' departure and cement the homosocial bond between the two men. In restoring Aeneas' fleet and that fleet's masculinity, Iarbas hopes to soon take on the identity that Aeneas had occupied. Romantic involvement with Dido has already been shown to alter the identity of her male

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[36] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 38.

[37] Cf. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 36: "To be feminized or suffer gender confusion within a framework that includes a woman is, however, dire... *any* erotic involvement with an actual woman threatens to be unmanning."

lover, as at 3.4. 58 when Dido renames Aeneas with the name of her former husband. By aspiring to be loved by Dido, Iarbas stands to become either Aeneas or the phantasmic male identity, Sichaeus, that haunts Dido throughout the play. Iarbas's final line in the play, punctuated with his suicide, seems to conflate his own identity with that of the man he could not become: "Dido, I come to thee: ay me, Aeneas!" (5.1. 318).

"Gender inversion" and the pursuit of men by women:

For all the complexity of Dido and Aeneas' relationship, one aspect of their courtship is perfectly clear: Dido's character is granted nearly all of the dramatic agency as she pursues Aeneas. Sara Munson Deats comments, "In the series of interactions between the Queen of Carthage and the Trojan refugee, Dido reverses gender expectations to perform the role of the courtly lover rather than the coy mistress: she initiates and directs the action; she praises Aeneas; and she gives him gifts." [38] Marlowe endows Dido with the full repertoire of courtly love tactics, right down to the heightened Petrarchanism with which she blazons the absent Aeneas in act 3, scene 1.[39] Similarly, Shakespeare will grant Titania absolute agency in her interactions with Bottom; her speech regarding Bottom takes on a similar Petrarchan quality. Although Deats and

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[38] Sara Munson Deats, *Sex, Gender, and Desire*, 95. Cf. Robert Logan, *Shakespeare's Marlowe*, 187, and his comments regarding *Dido* and *Antony and Cleopatra*: "Superficially, *Dido* and *Antony* appear to be similar. Both plays seem to dramatize from within a familiar patriarchal perspective a reversal of gender roles in which the female assumes a position of dominance and manly assertiveness and the male is castigated for his unmanliness."

[39] *Dido,* III.i.84-86: "I'll make me bracelets of his golden hair; / His glistering eyes shall be my looking-glass, / His lips an altar..." See Clare R. Kinney, "Epic Transgression and the Framing of Agency in *Dido Queen of Carthage," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 40, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 265 for a discussion of Dido's "masculine" speeches about her erotic desire for Aeneas.

Robert Logan both seem to read the nature of these interactions as strict gender inversions, I will contend that Eve Sedgwick's observations about Shakespeare's Sonnet 144 may come nearer the truth:

> ...the woman finds grouped with her female-ness an overwhelmingly, eschatologically negative moral valuation, a monopoly on initiative, desire, and power, and a strain of syntax and word choice suggesting that she is the container and others are the thing contained.[40]

The 'monopoly on initiative, desire, and power' that Sedgwick articulates holds true for Dido throughout the play and seems to inhere in both the female prince and in Titania, her numinous counterpart from *MND*. Thus, Marlowe's creation of an active, pursuing Dido may well be rooted in the same anxieties about female agency, particularly sexual agency and the associated threat of containment, that prompts Iarbas' comments about co-occupying the 'ugly cave' with Aeneas. Shakespeare gives voice to a similar anxiety in Titania's seduction of Bottom: "Out of this wood do not desire to go: / Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no," (3.2. 145-146). Shakespeare's phrasing itself echoes Dido's intimation to Aeneas early in Marlowe's play, when Aeneas attempts to slink away from Dido's court before their fateful banquet: "*Aeneas:* "This place beseems me not: O pardon me! *Dido:* I'll have it so; Aeneas, be content," (2.1. 94-95). Rather than a kind of proto-feminist inversion of gender roles that privileges positive female agency, then, perhaps both Marlowe's and Shakespeare's decisions to write assertive female characters point up for examination a similar, male-centered anxiety about female passions and restraint or control by women.

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[40] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 32.

Marlowe's *Dido* contains a handful of lines that can scarcely be interpreted as other than characters' misogynistic distrust of Carthage's female prince.[41] Whether these tendencies arise from Marlowe's parody of Virgil remains uncertain, but one clear function of the play's emphasis on Dido's agency is her potential to efface Aeneas' identity by renaming him Sichaeus. Dido prepares Aeneas from their first moments together for the eventual subsumption of his identity under that of her previous husband. Her first sight of Aeneas in the play prompts her to clothe him in her husband's garb: "Warlike Aeneas, and in these base robes? / Go fetch the garment which Sichaeus ware. / Brave Prince, welcome to Carthage and to me," (2.1. 79-81). Their relationship's eventual consummation at the end of act 3 features Dido's exalted proclamation to Aeneas that his title has changed: "Sichaeus, not Aeneas, be thou call'd; / The King of Carthage, not Anchises' son," (3.4. 58-59). Dido's simulated marriage to Aeneas is a totalizing force that aims at the erasure of Aeneas' past and future imperial agenda and redefines the Trojan's identity in relation only to Dido.[42] Her assertion of authority is complete and unqualified, as her later command that "Aeneas ride as Carthaginian King," (4.4. 78) will make patently clear.

Emma Buckley's description of Dido and her spousal surrogate remains one of the few accounts of Dido's marriage that sees the scene as an increase in, rather than a

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[41] E.g. "I may not dure this female drudgery!" (4.3. 55) or "Banish that ticing dame from forth your mouth... This is no life for men-at-arms to live, / Where dalliance doth consume a soldier's strength, / And wanton motions of alluring eyes / Effeminate our minds inur'd to war." (4.3. 31-36)

[42] Cf. Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 131.

diminution of, Dido's autonomy: "Instead, the 'hero' of the play, [Marlowe's] Dido strenuously attempts to constitute herself anew as an independent and politically astute ruler who seeks to cement her power through marriage."[43] Rather than undermining Dido's authority, a husband would "cement her power" because it would eliminate the political distractions and considerations involved in regal courtship. Dido's status as a marriageable woman represents her greatest threat to the play's overriding masculine order and its imperial agenda, in that her princely authority enables her to create a new subject-hood for Aeneas by naming him king of a realm to which he previously lacked loyalties. Whether Dido abnegates her own authority in naming Aeneas king or not–and her imperious commands to Aeneas and Anna at 4.4. 71-86 indicate that she does not–her successful reconstitution of him as the Carthaginian Sichaeus supplants his identity as a Trojan and eliminates the necessity of his quest. Aeneas recognizes Dido's regal potency as manifestly as he fears her abilities to contain him in Carthage, as his words upon contemplating departure from Carthage express:

> Her silver arms will coll me round about
> And tears of pearl cry, 'Stay, Aeneas, stay!'
> Each word she says will then contain a crown,
> And every speech be ended with a kiss. (4.3. 51-54)

Unlike Aeneas, who swears a number of hollow oaths that he will remain in Carthage, Dido's promises bestow crowns effectively. Yet for Aeneas, the crowns bestowed represent a physical manifestation of the bond his marriage to Dido implies, and her

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[43] Emma Buckley, "Live, False Aeneas!" 140. Cf. Clare Kinney, "Epic Transgression and the Framing of Agency," 267: "The queen does not only crown Aeneas, she deifies him, surrendering divine 'authorship' to the god she has invented" Dido's imperious language, however, indicates otherwise.

ultimately failed coronation of Aeneas results not from a shortfall in Dido's power, but rather from Aeneas' rejection of what he perceives as threatening containment by Dido and her matriarchal order.

In a drastically lighter context, *MND's* subplot between Bottom and Titania also addresses an authoritative female pursuing and crowning her interloping male lover. Much like in *Dido*, Titania's coronation of Bottom meets with the disapprobation of male characters within the text because of her assertion of dominion over Bottom. Prior to Titania's crowning Bottom, Oberon is content to watch bemusedly as she cavorts with the asinine mortal. Titania transgresses Oberon's expectations in her symbolic elevation of Bottom to crown-wearing lover: "I did upbraid her, and fall out with her. / For she his hairy temples then had rounded / With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers," (4.1. 49-51).[44] Oberon's decision to end his spell over Titania and her dotage upon Bottom reflects his discomfort with her contentedness to rule Bottom and make him a surrogate to Oberon.[45] He fully realizes Titania's autonomy only when he witnesses her mock coronation of Bottom, which dramatizes Titania's ability to reign absolute among subjects who are not likewise fairy gods. Oberon uses the moment to reassert his patriarchal regime by cajoling Titania into granting him control of her changeling boy. His interruption of the Bottom subplot therefore seeks to terminate Titania's matriarchy

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[44] I return to this quotation below in my discussion of the plays' conflation of maternal and erotic love.

[45] Cf. Bate, *Shakespeare's Ovid*, 143. Bate suggests that, "...by inverting the customary gender roles–the rapacious divinity is female, as in *Venus and Adonis*–and by making the mortal into a wise fool, Shakespeare defuses the encounter into comedy."

entirely, denying her both her inferior lover and her surrogate son. Titania's tryst with Bottom does not itself "divest her of autonomy and power," as Louis Montrose has argued, but rather suggests her capacity for fully autonomous ruling and her ability to create subordinates to her regime.[46] Titania's authority is the threat that Oberon wishes to contain.

In reconsidering the pursuit of male lovers by females in *MND* and *Dido*, it becomes apparent that Shakespeare and Marlowe are interested not simply in a gender inversion of traditional courtship, but rather that they are delineating the stakes of matriarchy for the men involved. Both plays indicate a measure of anxiety about female agency and the capacity of powerful females to contain unwitting males. Oberon's reinstitution of his patriarchal reign strips Titania of her maternal role, and so mirrors *Dido*'s collapse of gynocratic Carthage as the titular queen loses her surrogate son and husband. Perhaps the truest gender inversion in the plays comes in Titania's comment regarding Bottom: "Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently" (3.1. 194). This moment foreshadows the ominous silencing of all female characters, Hippolyta excepted, in *MND's* final act–a silencing that in some ways mirrors the successive suicides of both Dido and her similarly assertive sister, Anna. If the eventual destruction of matriarchy in *Dido* and *MND* seems flatly cautionary against the dangers posed by female princes,

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[46] Cf. Loius Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre (*Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 169. Montrose argues that Titania's tryst with Bottom "divests her of her autonomy and power" and results in her "degradation and containment." Montrose seems to overlook both the contentment and authority Titania achieves in her relationship with Bottom, whom she both dominates and crowns at will.

however, one need only bear in mind Aeneas' departure from Carthage as the un-exculpated causer of mass suicide.

Substitution and conflation of maternal and erotic relations:

One of the potential effects of the 'inversion' of gender roles in erotic relations–or at least of the primacy of female agency in both Titania's and Dido's pursuit of their respective lovers–arises in a tendency to conflate maternal and erotic roles with respect to the pursued men. Sarah Munson Deats mentions in *Dido* a "proliferation of both actual and surrogate mothers" that "relates to the play's method of production."[47] Deats refers to the play's composition for the Chapel Children boys' repertory theatre at Cambridge and a likely desire on Marlowe's part to fully exploit both the talents and the bodily realities of pre-pubescent actors.[48] Marlowe's play features multiple scenes with young boys being dandled (by Dido, by Jove, by Dido's nurse), and one can surmise a parodic humor when considering the physical awkwardness inherent in the performance of these scenes. Because all characters would originally have been played by prepubescent boys, there would be less of a visual difference between the physical stature of Aeneas and Dido, or

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[47] Sarah Munson Deats, *Sex, Gender, and Desire*, 118. Cf. Harry Levin, *The Overreacher*, 16: "Her [Dido's] attachment to Aeneas is not much less maternal than that of his actual mother, Venus herself."

[48] Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004): 114-115. Cf. Stanley Wells, "Boy Should be Girls: Shakespeare's Female Roles and the Boy Players, *New Theatre Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (May 2009): 172-177.

between any of the boys being dandled and their dandlers.[49] This element of performance would have generated visual instability that would allow Marlowe to suggest collapsed distinctions between boys and men, sons and lovers. Add to this Dido's already eminent, princely character and Aeneas' role as supplicant and the boundaries between the adult male and his son, likewise a supplicant, begin to blur.

Aeneas certainly recognizes his debt to Dido for her nourishment of his men and the restoration of his ships: "O Dido, patroness of all our lives, / When I leave thee, death be my punishment!" (4.4. 55-56). Whether Dido's positioning as patroness to Aeneas and his men constitutes a maternal relationship between her and Aeneas in and of itself remains open for debate. What is clear, however, is that Aeneas' affair with Dido comes to fruition through Ascanius' and Cupid's actions, which establish a maternal relation between Dido and Aeneas' son and imply the attending union of the parental figures.

Curiously, the first line Ascanius addresses to Dido is, "Madam, you shall be my mother," (2.1. 96). The ever-resourceful mother Venus recognizes in Ascanius a means by which she can cast Dido into a role other than prince; once Venus has substituted Aeneas' brother, Cupid, for Ascanius, she has set the stage to ensnare Dido. Act 3, scene 1 dramatizes Cupid's ability to metamorphose Dido into both mother and captivated

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[49] Clare R. Kinney, "Epic Transgression and the Framing of Agency in *Dido Queen of Carthage," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 40, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 271. Kinney notes, "On the public stage, Aeneas would have been played by a man, Dido by a boy, but the boys' company does not permit the projection of a gendered hierarchy privileging masculine agency upon the physical differences between an adult male player and a boy actor."

lover. When Dido allows Cupid onto her lap, she enables a conflation of the erotic and the maternal by simultaneously embracing the embodiment of erotic love and receiving love's 'golden arrow.' Dido's apparent substitution of maternal for romantic love plays out dramatically as she ostensibly rejects Iarbas for Cupid. In the absence of stage directions, one could easily read Dido's violent reaction to Iarbas' pleas for attention as an impatient desire to further dote upon her surrogate son. Presumably, Cupid has engendered in Dido a burning desire for Aeneas. Yet on its face, this memorable scene depicts Dido first rejecting Iarbas for maternity, then supplanting Cupid with an Aeneas she has similar authority over.

If Venus' avenue into implanting erotic desire in Dido presents itself via maternal relations, then Jupiter's means of impelling Aeneas to fulfill his imperial fate constitutes an emphasis on the bond between father and son and a rejection of Carthage and its matriarchal order. Unlike Virgil's Aeneas, Marlowe's Aeneas attempts abortively to embark and sail away from Carthage before his final departure, only to realize he has abandoned his son. Hermes must appear twice before the recalcitrant straggler of Marlowe's creation, and his successful appeal to Aeneas invokes Ascanius' fate: "Too too forgetful of thine own affairs, / Why wilt thou so betray thy son's good hap?...Yet think upon Ascanius' prophecy," (5.1. 30-40). Hermes also reveals at this point that he has brought the true Ascanius–unlooked for and unmissed–back to Aeneas and sent the impostor Cupid away. This epiphany by Jupiter's messenger effectively ends Aeneas' stay in Carthage and thwarts Dido's plan to hold Aeneas by sending his son to live with

her nurse (4.4. 104-107).[50] When Dido realizes that Aeneas has reclaimed Ascanius, she underscores the gravity of her twofold loss: "Had I a son by thee, the grief were less, / That I might see Aeneas in his face." (5.1. 149-150) Dido's words indicate the potential, once again, of equivocation between her romantic and maternal ties to Aeneas and his bloodline. Her hypothetical retention of Aeneas' son would enable a quasi-substitution of that son, in whose face Aeneas himself is discernible, for her failed marriage to her love interest.

In writing *MND,* Shakespeare seems to have seized upon Marlowe's insight that the interaction between a princely female and her paramour is not entirely dissimilar to the state of dependency existing between a male child and his maternal figure. A chance meeting between Puck and one of Titania's fairies reveals that Titania and Oberon are at odds because of a disputed changeling boy. Titania's claim to the child arises from her relationship to his mother, who had been her votress before dying in childbirth. As Titania describes her friendship with the votress (2.1. 121-137), her words make clear the maternal nature of her bond to the changeling. Oberon desires the boy as a "henchman," yet in Puck's words: "...she perforce withholds the loved boy, / Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy," (2.1. 26-27), just as she later crowns Bottom. Oberon's jealousy seems somewhat predictable: his position of favor has been usurped by Titania's

[50] The scene in which Dido's nurse bears Cupid/Ascanius away (4.5. 1-37), interestingly, also foregrounds the possibility of conflated erotic and maternal love through its awakening of erotic desire in Dido's aged nurse.

affection for another, and her withholding of the boy from Oberon's masculine regime implies a privileging of Titania's motherly connections over her romantic bonds.

In order to assert his will over Titania, Oberon has recourse to erotic rather than maternal love. His decision to enthrall Titania using love-in-idleness bespeaks his conviction that her maternal affection for the changeling boy threatens his position more nearly than a romantic rival could. What begins as Oberon's amusement when Titania takes up with Bottom quickly transforms into anger, however:

> I did upbraid her and fall out with her:
> For she his hairy temples then had rounded
> with coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers...
> I then did ask of her her changeling child;
> Which straight she gave me...
> And now I have the boy, I will undo
> This hateful imperfection of her eyes. (4.1. 49-62)

Oberon's anger at Titania's erotic dalliance becomes aroused only when her actions begin to mimic the favor she had shown the changeling boy, thereby suggesting Bottom's allure as a conflation of Titania's erotic and maternal affections. That Titania yields up the boy whom she had stridently defended so quickly while enamored of Bottom further aligns Bottom with the changeling boy: she curtails her maternal care for the boy only after a suitable substitute has been presented to her.[51]

MND displays a deep debt to *Dido* in this pivotal episode, not only in the complex of romantic and maternal conflations, but also in the narrative outline of each. Both Dido and Titania reject one heterosexual marriage for maternal surrogacy only to have that

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[51] Cf. Bruce Boehrer, "Economies of Desire in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" *Shakespeare Studies* 32 (Jan. 2004): 108-110.

maternal relationship replaced with a heteroerotic (and in one case bestial), extramarital affair. Both maternal relationships involve changelings: the Indian boy and the substituted Ascanius. As important a parallel between the two episodes is the political order in which these relationships arise. Dido's Carthage certainly exists in a matriarchal state; Titania's forest–or her bower, at the very least–also suggests a female-centered court. As Mary Ellen Lamb states, "Through the substitution of Bottom for the changeling in Titania's arms, the forest episode stages the absurd–yet compelling–fantasy of a return to a female-dominated space of magic and beauty."[52] Marlowe and Shakespeare both create a female-dominated space that exists oppositionally to patriarchy–either in Oberon's will to make the changeling boy a "henchman" or in Aeneas' fate to fulfill Troy's imperial destiny. Within this space, maternity and eroticism collapse into similar manifestations and threaten to puncture patriarchy's masculinist self-importance by reminding us that gods and heroes can quite resemble little boys.

Infantilization of male lovers:

As the previous section has implied, Shakespeare's and Marlowe's tendency to collapse and conflate maternal with erotic affections also entails occasional infantilization of male lovers. One of the moments in *Dido* that has been frequently read as an irrefutable signifier of the play's parodic intentions is the play's opening scene, in which Jupiter dandles Ganymede and buys his affections with riches pilfered from other

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[52] Mary Ellen Lamb, "Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practices and the Production of Popular Culture in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Autumn, 2000): 305.

Olympian gods.[53] Timothy Crowley links this moment directly to the opening line of Virgil's *Aeneid*:

> *Dido* provides its first hint that the only 'armes' to appear in its dramatic action are those of love. Jupiter's pursuit of Ganymede humorously prefigures Dido's of Aeneas. The play opens with an image of arms and a boy that parodies Vergil's 'arms and the man.'[54]

If Crowley's formulation is correct, Aeneas will become the Ganymede to Dido's Jupiter. Marlowe foregrounds this entailment in his presentation of Dido's wooing of Aeneas, which echoes Jupiter's promises to Ganymede. Ganymede coyly responds to Jupiter's advances and expresses that his affection can be bought with baubles: "I would have a jewel for mine ear, / and a fine brooch to put in my hat, / and then I'll hug with you an hundred times," (1.1. 46-48). Dido appears to have learned from Ganymede's desires: her first attempt to proclaim her love for Aeneas depicts the wealth she wishes to bestow on him:

> I'll give the tackling made of rivell'd gold
> Wound on the barks of odoriferous trees
> Oars of massy ivory, full of holes,
> Through which the water shall delight to play;
> Thy anchors shall be hew'd from crystal rocks,
> Which if thou lose shall shine above the waves;
> The masts whereon thy swelling sails shall hang,

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[53] Cf. David L. Orvis, "'Lustful Jove and his adulterous child': Classical Paiderastia as Same-Sex Marriage in *Dido Queene of Carthage*," in *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England: Gender, Instruction, and Performance*, ed. Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson(Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2011), 101-112.

[54] Timothy Crowley, "Arms and the Boy," 416.

Hollow pyramides of silver plate... (3.1. 115-122)[55]

Dido's catalogue of wealth does not generate expedient replacements for the functional ship parts Aeneas has requested, but her promises echo Jupiter's speech to Ganymede offering to despoil Olympian treasuries for Ganymede's pleasure (1.1. 34-45). The anti-utilitarian nature of Dido's offerings makes clear her emphasis on the sensuous delights possible in outfitting Aeneas' hypothetical fleet. Her offer thus appeals not to the military man in Aeneas, but rather to a puerile desire to possess toy ships wrought with finery. Aeneas is never meant to sail aboard his ships, after all; Dido's conditional promises are made contingent upon Aeneas remaining in Carthage.

Shakespeare draws upon Marlowe's insight that catalogues of material pleasures can constitute effective seduction as he considered Titania and Bottom's tryst. Like Dido, Titania entices her would-be-lover with fleshly delights reflecting her mastery of the wooded domain. While Dido offers riches befitting an empress–wealth, finery, and sumptuous ship fittings–Shakespeare has taken Marlowe's point that such seduction appeals to boyish instincts. In writing Titania's seduction of Bottom, Shakespeare uses the form of Dido's tactic and the content of Dido's nurse's enticement of Cupid/Ascanius in a fashion that confirms a conscious and open engagement with Marlowe's play on Shakespeare's part:

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[55] Cf. Thomas P. Harrison, *Shakespeare and Marlowe's* Dido*, The University of Texas Studies in English* 35 (1956): 59-60. Harrison suggests that Shakespeare draws on Dido's speech in *Antony and Cleopatra* for Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra's barge.

Tita. Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
(*MND,* 3.1. 164-73)

Nurse. No, thou shalt go with me unto my house.
I have an orchard that hath store of plums,
Brown almonds, cerises, ripe figs, and dates,
Dewberries, apples, yellow oranges,
A garden where are beehives full of honey,
Musk roses, and a thousand sort of flowers;
And in the midst doth run a silver stream,
Where thou shalt see the red-gilled fishes leap,
White swans, and many lovely waterfowl.
(*Dido,* 4.5. 3-11)

These two catalogues feature an abundance of similar objects and reflect a similar conception of what constitutes opulence. Titania's list of fruits includes several of the very same objects as the nurse's, and her desire for her fairies to "hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes" indicates a similar valuation of the delights of beholding as the nurse's "seeing the red-gilled fishes leap." I discussed previously the substitution of maternal surrogacy for erotic love; considering the addressees of these speeches demonstrates that Titania's view of what befits a man aligns neatly with the nurse's view of what will delight a little boy. Shakespeare's striking use of a single rhyme at the end of each line in Titania's speech may also bespeak perceived simplicity in the object of her affections and further intensify the infantilizing effect of her offerings.

Bottom and Titania's next scene together extends through the remainder of the nurse's catalogue of earthly delights when Titania tells Bottom, "Come sit thee down upon this flow'ry bed, / While I thy amiable cheeks do coy, / And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head, / and kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy," (4.1. 1-4). The elements of the nurse's speech that had not appeared in Titania's offer of riches to Bottom–the indeterminate flowers and the specific musk roses–emerge as Titania prepares to make

love to him. Just as Bottom awakens Titania's desires, Marlowe's nurse's promises to Cupid/Ascanius are interrupted throughout with longing assertions of her own newly revived erotic desires: "Say Dido what she will, I am not old; / I'll be no more a widow, I am young; / I'll have a husband, or else a lover," (4.5. 21-23). Marlowe suggests that her maternal care for Cupid/Ascanius awakens eroticism in the nurse. Shakespeare's allusive repetition of this moment likewise suggests that Titania's dalliance with the mortal Bottom cannot be entirely separated from her view of him as a childlike inferior.

How to woo queens–Cupid's polarizing arrows:

Shakespeare's and Marlowe's respective plays grapple with a similar set of issues in their establishment of princely females who must be made to fall in love. *MND* opens on preparations for Theseus and Hippolyta's impending wedding in an Athens that presents a striking counterpoint to the faery-dominated woods. Athens represents an incontrovertibly patriarchal space, where Theseus and Egeus enforce or circumvent laws to assert their wills over the play's women. Theseus' relationship with Hippolyta also provides a model of wooing a princely woman that functions oppositionally to the genesis of love that will occur in the woods: "Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword, / And won thy love, doing thee injuries;" (1.1. 16-17). The duke of Athens describes a form of romantic rivalry that occurs between lovers rather than among a triangle of would-be lovers, and his reference to the violence with which he conquered Hippolyta casts a long shadow over the play's closing act and its silenced women. In presenting a patriarchal regime that functions via the violent overthrow of an opposing matriarchal

society, Shakespeare suggests that where female princes threaten to restrain, male princes forcibly conquer.

Theseus' wooing of Hippolyta presents one possible means of wooing a queen, but *Dido* and *MND* present another possibility. Cupid's medicine figures prominently in both plays, administered either by the god of *eros* himself, or by the Hermes-cum-Cupid character that is Puck. Oberon describes the provenance of the 'love-in-idleness' flower as Olympian: "Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell: / It fell upon a little western flower, / Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound" (2.1. 165-167). Shakespeare defers the physical wounding that Cupid would normally require to engender love in his arrow's target, but the visible bruising of the love-in-idleness flower serves as a reminder that Cupid's act is an inherently violent one. Marlowe's *Dido* omits stage directions in much of the play, and this is likewise true of the scene when Cupid causes Dido's love for Aeneas, yet her comic vacillations between loathing dismissal and befuddled fondness for Iarbas in act 3, scene 1 may serve as an indicator of the multiple piercings she endures from Cupid's arrow. In all three instances, then, the genesis of love is a kind of violence, either direct as in Theseus's injuries to Hippolyta and Cupid's presumed prodding of Dido with his arrow, or indirect–by means of a bruised flower administered to unconscious subjects. In all cases, the vessel receiving Cupid's medicine is in a sense victimized, and Marlowe further dramatizes this fact through love's capacity to upend normal behavior and sever relationships external to the desire created by Cupid.

When Cupid initially begins work on Dido, no one seems more surprised by her abrupt and vehement rejection of Iarbas than Dido herself. She questions her own motives aloud to Iarbas: "No, live, Iarbas; what hast thou deserv'd, / That I should say thou art no love of mine?" (3.1. 41-42) Within ten lines of dialogue, however, her emotions toward Iarbas have completely reversed: "*Anna*: Wherefore doth Dido bid Iarbas go? *Dido*: Because his loathsome sight offends mine eye, / and in my thoughts is shrin'd another love" (3.1. 55-57). Marlowe adds a repellent effect to Cupid's medicine and its capacity to cause irrationally consuming love. Marlowe's dramatization of this effect, which should generate an Iarbas who is at once hopeful and injured as his hopes are dashed, plays out with similar effects in Demetrius and Lysander's sudden rejection of Hermia (*Midsummer* 3.2. 114 ff). Shakespeare deploys a Marlovian innovation in this case: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* describes Cupid as possessing two arrows–one golden, for causing love, and the other leaden and blunt, "serving to drive all love away," (book I, ll 471-473).[56] Marlowe's combination of the two effects in one subject lends itself especially well to the triangulated romantic rivalries of *Dido* and *MND* in that the object of the rivalry clearly rejects one of the rivals, thus further demonstrating that triangulated desire results not from equal claims to the romantic object, but rather from a homosocial desire to remain rivals–i.e. involved in a passionate relationship of some kind with one's rival.

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[56] Quotation refers to Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1955), 17.

Notably, Marlowe's formulation of bipolar erotic love does not feature one key Shakespearean addition: "The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid / Will make or man or woman madly dote / Upon the next live creature that it sees," (2.1. 171-173). Dido specifically loves only Aeneas when Cupid sticks her with his arrow, although Iarbas and Anna are both present at the time. Yet Shakespeare's addition could be an adaptation of a famous line from *Hero and Leander* that he quotes in *As You Like It*: "Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?"[57] Although many of Shakespeare's dramatic techniques in the Bottom subplot of *MND* derive directly from Marlowe's *Dido*, this notable departure from Marlowe introduces a chaotic, chance-driven element to Cupid's magic and enables the happenstance entanglement of Bottom and Titania.

One further similarity between Shakespeare's and Marlowe's employment of Cupid's love drug is the primacy of audition in filling out the effects of Cupid's spell. Aeneas' first major interaction with Dido involves him telling his tale of the siege of Troy. Dido appears rapt to Aeneas' words as he ends his tale, demanding more of the story while declaring how moved she is, and her exit following his performance immediately precedes Cupid's arrival on the scene. Heather James suggests that Aeneas' words have as much of an effect on the Carthaginian queen as Cupid's dart does: "Dido becomes a synecdoche for one of the most vulnerable orifices of Shakespearean bodies:

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[57] Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Poems and Translations* ed. Stephen Orgel (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1979), sestiad 1, l. 176.

the ear."[58] Likewise in *MND*, Titania finds herself wooed by Bottom's singing before she sees his person. Cupid's love tonic, combined with the equally potent effects of audition, yields an irresistible formula for engendering love in queens.

[58] James, "Dido's Ear," 365. James argues that Dido is the ideal auditor in Shakespeare's world and that she embodies Elizabethan discomfort with the affective power of theater.

Chapter 3: Conclusions: Asinine Heroism and Dramatic Analogues

As the above recapitulation of the numerous parodic techniques Shakespeare learns or borrows from Marlowe's *Dido* indicates, *MND* features a deep engagement with Marlowe's play on both structural and thematic grounds. Each of the dramaturgical methods discussed–instantiations of triangular erotic desire, "gender inversion" and the pursuit of men by women, substitution and conflation of maternal and erotic relations, infantilization of male lovers, and wooing queens with Cupid's polarizing arrows–figures prominently in both Dido's relationship with Aeneas and Bottom's with Titania. Shakespeare's comic subplot about the interaction between Bottom and Titania can thus be read as a microcosmic, mock-epic retelling of the main plot of *Dido*. Rather than a subplot that parodically or comically rehearses the events of *MND*'s main plot, Shakespeare writes a subplot that is tangential to the play's main action and in it interprets *Dido* as a comic storyline with potential to defer or avoid the harm caused by Aeneas' departure for Troy, provided its hero can leave off his imperial agenda and function as a non-disruptive interloper within a gynocratic space. Bottom's tryst with Titania parodies *Dido* by using multiple Marlovian tactics directly from Dido and Aeneas' affair, yet lowering the stakes of erotic entanglement in order to suggest a feasible alternative to Aeneas' catastrophic departure from Carthage. Within *MND*, Bottom and Titania's tryst serves as a counterpoint to the sometimes violent silencing–and consistent male domination–of women in Athens proper under Theseus' ruthless patriarchy.

Shakespeare's choice of Theseus for his Athenian duke hearkens back yet again to his and Marlowe's Ovidian influences; Theseus, like Aeneas, serves as an imagined recipient of one of Ovid's *Heroides*. In setting up *MND*'s early conflict between Oberon and Titania, Shakespeare alludes to his knowledge of Theseus' culpable past interactions with women: "Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night / From Perigouna, whom he ravished; / And make him with fair Aegles break his faith, / With Ariadne and Antiopa?" (2.1. 77-80). These lines serve as a reminder that Theseus' violent wooing of Hippolyta was not his first problematic treatment of a woman. Ovid's *Heroides* 10 contains an epistle to Theseus from Ariadne, who remains stranded on an uninhabited island where Theseus had stolen away from her sleeping body. Ariadne's somewhat trite indictment of Theseus in her letter describes succinctly why his leadership in Athens presents a hostile environs for the city's women: "A savage beast compared to you is kind. / Than you, what worse protector could I find?" (*Heroides* 10, 5-6).[59] Theseus' presence in *MND* is that of an ostensibly benign duke, yet Shakespeare's evocation of his past as a classical hero–and abandoner of the women who aided him–also evokes Marlowe's commentary on Aeneas.

This study began as an attempt to account for my sense that Marlowe's Aeneas closely resembles Shakespeare's Bottom–not only in their shared romantic plot structures, but also in their characterological similarities–in Aeneas' general inability to perceive social cues, his almost complete lack of dramatic agency, his frequent

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[59] Daryl Hine, *Ovid's Heroines: A Verse Translation of the* Heroides (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991), 35.

inarticulacy, and his bumbling fecklessness when he does attempt to depart Carthage.[60] In pursuing a Marlovian, systematic undermining of Bottom's character, however, I found that Shakespeare mirrors the structure of Aeneas' relationship with Dido in his formulation of Bottom and Titania's tryst, yet withholds from parodically lambasting Bottom and, in fact, enhances Bottom's positive qualities throughout his time in Titania's bower. A comparison of Bottom and Aeneas generates a list of surprising failures by Aeneas and outright triumphs by Bottom, and there is a prevailing sense in which Bottom rescues tragic plots and translates them to comedy, whereas Aeneas transforms a comedy (his marriage to Dido) and a history (the founding of Rome) into unmitigated tragedy.[61]

Bottom translated–and perhaps Bottom more generally–is an ass. He may be charismatic and often eloquent, but he is an ass. The obvious question becomes, then, how a supposedly heroic Aeneas can be morally aligned with an asinine Bottom. My contention is that while both the previous descriptors hold for their respective characters, they can also be fairly convincingly transposed and remain accurate. Bottom does not lack heroic elements in his social order, nor does Aeneas eschew asininity. Indeed, Shakespeare lends Bottom heightened eloquence following his translation, whereas one of Marlowe's key characterological innovations in creating a severely undermined Aeneas involves a denial of the Trojan's trademark articulacy from the Virgilian tradition, as Emma Buckley has keenly observed:

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[60] See n. 33, above. Donald Stump provides a comprehensive list of the "most ridiculous or grotesque departures from the *Aeneid*," that succinctly details Aeneas' shortcomings in *Dido*.

[61] I owe this formulation to Eric Mallin's incisive commentary on this project.

> In sum, Marlowe's Aeneas gets things wrong; he leaves bits out; he fails to account adequately for his movements that night. No wonder critics have often perceived a 'literary' feel to the speech – it is, in essence, fiction. This Aeneas is making a bold effort to impersonate Virgil's hero, offering a version of the Fall of Troy in which he starts as *pius* hero complete with iconic family picture: but the gaps in his account reveal that he is literally playing at such a role.[62]

Beyond the narratological shortcomings of Aeneas' tale, there are other revelations about Aeneas' character that the narrator unwittingly professes. His account of the fall of Troy is mostly observational, and its moments of greatest detail involve the feats and fates of other characters.[63] By contrast, Aeneas' narration of his own deeds–aside from references to flight and the women he left behind–is vaguely obfuscating and spans only five lines. Of his own fighting, Aeneas can only say, "and [I] with this sword / sent many of their savage ghosts to hell," and "had not we / fought manfully, I had not told this tale," (2.1. 211-212 and 270-271). Aeneas ends his tale with an image of himself–having lost his wife and let Cassandra lie in the burning streets of Troy–diving from a ship into deep water in order to return for Polyxena, whom he cannot hope to reach. When Iarbas presses the point, Aeneas declines to answer and instead prompts Achates to fill in the gaps in his account.

For a character who woos and charms best as a narrator of the fall of Troy, Aeneas experiences inarticulacy with surprising frequency. Twice in act 2, Aeneas must yield the speaking floor to Achates when he is directly addressed. These two instances differ in

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[62] Buckley, "Live False Aeneas!" 137.

[63] See *Dido,* II. i. 121-290, but especially 191-192 and following: "Frighted with this confused noise, I rose, / And looking from a turret might behold..."

circumstance, but not in kind. Upon meeting members of his former crew, he commands, "Achates, speak, for I am overjoyed," (2.1. 54). Later, when pressed about further details of his Troy narrative, he again asks, "Achates, speak, sorrow hath tired me quite," (2.1. 293). In beginning the tale of his flight from Troy, Aeneas commands himself to speak "with Achilles' tongue," an enactment of ethopoeia that enables Aeneas to convey information in the manner of a rehearsed speech. When confronted unexpectedly with strong emotions or prying questions, his eloquence fails because it is delimited by his imitation of speech that has been previously composed. Aeneas' haziness on many details of his flight from Troy, juxtaposed with the startling specificity of his narration of Priam's death (2.1. 223-265)–a moment in which his narrative in no way accounts for his knowledge of the events–reveals the fictive character of his speech and suggests that, like Bottom in *MND,* Aeneas has failed to recall the details of his own actions and has got a Peter Quince-like character "to write a ballad of this dream" (or rather, nightmare) for later retelling. For all Aeneas' problems as a storyteller, however, his narrative–with the aid of his brother Cupid–succeeds in ensnaring Dido and enabling her translation of Aeneas into Sichaeus during their simulated marriage.

When Dido translates Aeneas' identity to that of her late husband, she also translates his role within the story from that of the imperial questor to her princely concubine and Carthaginian king. Following Aeneas' presumed triumphal procession through Carthage following Dido's commands in act 4, scene 4, his first onstage action as king of Carthage features him walking through the streets playing at architect. At the

opening of act 5, Marlowe's stage direction reads, "Enter Aeneas, with a paper in his hand, drawing the platform of the city." Whether this moment is meant to establish Aeneas as an active leader, intimately involved with the daily affairs of his city, remains unresolved. Hermes arrives on the scene and truncates Aeneas' brief rule in Carthage, mocking Aeneas' craft: "Why, cousin, stand you building cities here / And beautifying the empire of this Queen / While Italy is clean out of thy mind?" (5.1. 27-29). Hermes reminds Aeneas that for all his pretensions to the contrary, Carthage remains Dido's city. The Olympian messenger's words undercut Aeneas' grand plans to reshape Carthage to his own designs and cast him as a character closer to a rude mechanical than a monarch. Marlowe's vision of Aeneas in Carthage and Hermes' dismissive encounter with his mortal cousin do not revolve around Dido's court, but rather around Aeneas in the streets as a tinkerer, trying his best to present a wall. As Aeneas' departure from Carthage will make manifest, however, Hermes' belittlement of Aeneas does not likewise lessen the impact of Aeneas' actions among other mortals; Aeneas' comic potential is circumscribed and delimited by Marlowe's canon, and his ultimately tragic and impassive abandonment of Dido appears at odds with Marlowe's reduction of Aeneas to a mechanical figure.

Shakespeare responds to Marlowe's diminished, bumbling, and at times anti-heroic Aeneas by considering the entailments of a romantic male protagonist whose primary profession is not the advancement of an imperial agenda. The resultant character is Nick Bottom, whose potential to benignly wander through Aeneas' *Dido* plot without catalyzing suicides or abandoning his dependents suggests that Bottom's particular strain

of appeal results not from the heroism of high pomp that drives Aeneas and Theseus, but rather an asinine heroism that enables a comic outcome from tragic story-lines.

Bottom's preeminence among Peter Quince's mechanicals cannot be disputed. When Quince assigns roles to his actors, there remains no doubt as to who should play the male lead of "Pyramus and Thisbe": "You can play no part but Pyramus: for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely, gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus" (1.2. 82). Although Quince's response to Bottom could be read as flattery in order to counter Bottom's desire to act every role in the inset play, the mechanicals' despair in act 4, scene 2 bespeaks their genuine belief in Bottom's ability to successfully discharge the role of their tragic hero. Bottom's confidence in his own performance abilities embodies the heroic side of his asinine character; it never occurs to him that he might not be an excellent Pyramus: "If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes: I will move storms, I will condole in some measure" (1.2. 21-23). Bottom's performance strikes a different note than he intends, as Theseus and the Athenians nobles' comments upon it indicate, yet the playlet serves to beguile the time and results in the duke's goodwill toward the mechanicals. Theseus requires no apology for the play, but tells Bottom: "Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed" (5.1. 342-43). This comment underpins the core of Bottom's appeal: unlike Aeneas, Bottom's actions and acting enable goodwill and do not create culpability. The obverse of Theseus' words implies also that when tragedy leaves survivors (such as Aeneas), blame accompanies their actions. Although Bottom

tells us that his "chief humor is for a tyrant," he recognizes that "a lover is more condoling" (2.1. 24-37). Unlike Marlowe's Aeneas, whose chief humor is for a lover but whose fate makes him cast off that role for the tyrant, Bottom is bound by no such demands and can act either role equally well. The mechanicals' performance results not in censure, but in light-hearted cajoling and benevolent approval.

Bottom's time gallivanting around the woods and acting as Titania's concubine sees him playing the lover yet again. His heroism among the mechanicals derives from his preeminent thespian skills, but Flute and Quince's comments during Bottom's absence also foreground his appeal for Titania: "*Flute:* No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens. *Quince*: Yea, and the best person, too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice" (4.2. 9-12). As noted above, Titania senses Bottom aurally before she sees him, and her first lines to him are, "I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again. / Mine ear is much enamored of thy note," (3.1. 137-138). Quince's malapropism strikes at the heart of Bottom's relationship with Titania: his sweet voice indeed makes him both a paramour and a paragon.

In contrast to Aeneas, whose undermined character in Carthage results in part from Marlowe's denial of his articulacy, Bottom translated finds himself more articulate than ever. Bottom can "gleek upon occasion"; and his interactions with Titania's fairy court allow him to showcase his wit and his mastery of courtly language (3.1. 170 ff). Bottom's puns on the names Mustardseed, Cobweb, and Peaseblossom and his deferential repetition of the phrase, "I shall desire you of more acquaintance," demonstrate a verbal

acuity and heightened sense of social awareness that display Bottom's respect even of a mock-court of faeries. Bottom's introduction to Titania's bower positions him as an interloping male love object, much like Aeneas, and the structural parallels of his involvement with Titania establish a set of characterological analogues that strengthen the notion that *MND*'s subplot parodies *Dido*.

If Bottom stands in for Marlowe's already parodic Aeneas, then Aeneas' interactions with characters in Marlowe's Carthage should likewise be traceable in Bottom's activities in the woods. In terms of romantic plot, both dramas feature: a male interloper in a female-dominated space who becomes a love object; a princely or numinous female who loves him; a set of gods (or faeries) who manipulate the plot's actors; an emphasis on divine enchantment for the creation of love; a simulated marriage and consummation (featuring actual or mock coronation); and ultimately the male interloper's departure from the female-dominated space. Mapping these structural features of *Dido* onto Bottom's interaction with Titania yields a portrait of Bottom as Aeneas, Titania as Dido/Juno, Oberon as Jupiter, Puck as Hermes/Cupid, *MND*'s changeling boy as Cupid/Ascanius, and–as suggested by the conflation of maternal and erotic love that figures prominently in both plays–a collapse of Bottom/Aeneas into the Changeling boy/Ascanius.

Shakespeare's elevation of Titania to a princely woman who is both the male interloper's lover and the wife of the divine plot manipulator combines with Bottom's asinine heroism to insulate Titania's court from the type of devastation wrought upon the

merely mortal Dido by the tragically fated Aeneas. Unlike Dido, whose demands for more thorough explanations from Aeneas are often met with deferral or dismissal, Titania's positioning enables her to command, "Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently." Titania glories in her totalizing maternal and erotic control of Bottom, and Bottom allows himself to be ruled by her rather than attempting to dictate his own agenda. Titania's tryst with Bottom represents a comic redemption of Dido's tragedy in that it is not the woman who is silenced or abandoned, but rather the male who is silenced and from whom others have "stolen hence, and left me asleep!" (4.1. 202-203). In the moment of Bottom's awakening, it is not only Aeneas' spurned lover who is redeemed, but also Theseus' abandoned Ariadne. Crucial to Shakespeare's translation of *Dido* from tragic to comic plot is Bottom's asinine heroism, which consists of more than mere fecklessness. Bottom seizes complete agency among the mechanicals and successfully dispatches a comic enactment of "Pyramus and Thisbe," yet his greatest virtue, in juxtaposition to Aeneas, is his ability to accept and interact gracefully with a regime that need not privilege his agency, nor male agency at all.

Shakespeare demonstrates in *MND* that he learned a great many lessons from Marlowe's *Dido*, yet the integral lesson of *Dido* runs deeper thematically than the useful structural, parodic techniques Shakespeare adapted and deployed in *MND*. Marlowe's systematic undermining of Aeneas' character and his outright refusal to redeem the 'hero' of his play conveys the unseemly reality that imperial patriarchy insists upon exploiting and wounding women for the furtherance of its imperatives. Shakespeare

seizes upon and inverts Marlowe's parodic commentary by imagining a hero who, asinine though he is, opposes the heroism of Aeneas and Theseus while enacting the same central plot. In *Dido,* Aeneas' translation to Sichaeus can never be entirely effectual because of the weight of the canon and Marlowe's dependence upon that canon for his parodic presentation of Aeneas. In translating Aeneas to Bottom, however, Shakespeare casts off the canonical circumscription of Aeneas' plot structure as tragic and enables its rehabilitation into comedy. Thus, Bottom as hero offers a remedy to the formula whereby classical heroes like Theseus and Aeneas must create their reputations through their treatment of tragic *mulieres relictae*. Instead, Bottom himself becomes the comic, benign *relictus*, attempting to make sense of a pleasant but hazy and dream-like affair that in all features except for catastrophe remembers Aeneas' time in Carthage.

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